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## 'Facing East' delves into diversity and love

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*FACING EAST*, Plan-B Theatre Company, Rose Wagner Center, through May 6 (355-2787), running time: 75 minutes (no intermission)

Carol Lynn Pearson's "Facing East" — a moving and straightforward look at an LDS couple reeling from the suicide of their excommunicated homosexual son — is ready for its close-up.

After this brief encore presentation of Pearson's slightly revised script, Plan-B will take "Facing East" (with the same cast) on a two-city, bicoastal tour for engagements off Broadway and in San Francisco.

Just as it did last November during the drama's world premiere (in a slightly larger Rose Wagner Center venue), "Facing East" packs a wallop, with a strong message about diversity and unconditional love.

Director Jerry Rapiere draws riveting performances from his three fine actors — Charles Lynn Frost and Jayne Luke as Alex and Ruth McCormick, the deceased man's bereaved parents, and Jay Perry as Marcus, their son's partner.

The setting is a cemetery shortly after the funeral for Andrew Isaac McCormick, 25, who has shot himself in a flower bed next to the Salt Lake LDS Temple. (Was he making a "statement"? Maybe. Maybe not.)

Alex, a prominent, conservative radio personality whose "One-Minute Dad" program is about to go big-time nationwide, is adamant that he and Ruth conduct an impromptu funeral service at their son's gravesite, because the funeral "in the cookie-cutter brick chapel" was a big lie.

Ruth vents her own guilt during the process, feeling that it may have been something hormonal that made their son gay.

Marcus shows up during the final third of the drama, hoping no one would be there and he could spend some time alone.

During a series of flashbacks — with all three players taking on the role of Andrew at some point — there are powerful and poignant insights into Andrew growing up and feeling different from others.

There is finger-pointing all-around. Marcus blames the McCormicks' church for Andrew's

problems but admits that he loves Andrew's parents "for all the good things you taught your son."

Pearson has added one short scene about 30 minutes into the action — an insightful flashback where Alex and his son talk about about a family deer hunt. (Pearson will be present for post-show discussions on May 3-5.)

*Sensitivity rating: The subject matter may be a little uncomfortable for some but there is nothing offensive in the dialogue.*

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